

## ASU Women's Tennis Downs ECU

Written by Staff Reports

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The Mountaineers kept their home winning streak alive as Appalachian State University women's tennis defeated East Carolina, 5-2, on Saturday at Yonahlossee Racquet Club. Appalachian (4-3) has now won all three of its home matches, while East Carolina (4-8) rounds out

a 1-2 week of play. In the doubles competition, ECU's No. 3 pair notched the first win, capitalizing on three break points to win, 8-2.

At No. 2 doubles, Appalachian seniors Gisela Fernandez and Gabriela Celi found themselves tied with their Pirate opponents, 4-4, before winning four straight games to take the match, 8-4. With the doubles point at stake, ASU's No. 1 duo of juniors Jennifer Ansari and Ellie Linsell dueled with ECU's Yilian Zhang and Danielle Terpko. The Mountaineers notched a break point early and were in front for most of the match, eventually leading 7-5. Facing defeat, the Pirates rallied, scoring a break point to level the score, 7-7.

After serving to 8-7, ECU's pair won a second break point and their fourth-straight game for the 9-7 victory, giving the Pirates a 1-0 lead in the team scoring.

In singles action, Appalachian's No. 2, Ansari, built a 4-0 lead in the first set. Her ECU opponent recovered with a pair of break points to close the gap to 5-4, but Ansari broke serve to close the first set 6-4. In the second set, the Mountaineer stole a 5-0 advantage en route to a 6-2 win in the second, equalizing the team score at 1-1.

At No. 3, Celi and her opponent exchanged a pair of breaks to find the match tied 5-5 in the first. Celi defended the Pirate serve and captured the first set 7-5. The second set proceeded in nearly identical fashion, as the players were again locked at 5-5. Celi triumphed again with a 7-5, 7-5 win, giving the Mountaineers their first lead, 2-1.

Appalachian sophomore Jessica Thaggard made quick work of her match at No. 4 singles. She locked down the first set before winning five straight games in the second en route to a 6-2, 6-1 win, putting the Apps one match point from the team victory.

In the top singles match, ASU's Linsell squared off against ECU's Natalie Collins. Linsell scored the only break point of the first set, taking it 6-4. In the second set, the Mountaineer broke to take a 6-5 lead with a chance to serve for the match, but Collins retorted with a break of her own. In the tiebreak, Linsell jumped out to a 2-0 lead, but Collins stole momentum and scored seven-straight en route to a 7-6(7-2) win to send the match to a deciding set.

After Linsell and Collins exchanged broke each other's serve early in the set, it was a late break for the Pirate that gave ECU a 5-4 lead and a chance to steal the match. In the end, ECU's Collins succeeded, 4-6, 7-6(2), 6-4, keeping the Pirates alive.

Appalachian freshman Gabby Gabriel stormed to a 6-0 first set at No. 6 singles. In the second set, ECU's Abby Richmond put up a strong fight, but after the two exchanged five straight break points, Gabriel served out the final game for a 6-0, 6-3 win, clinching the overall win for the Mountaineers.

In the day's final match, Appalachian's No. 4, Kim-Lea Dinh, fell behind after falling 4-6 in the first set. Dinh rebounded to take the second, 6-2, and both she and her Pirate broke serve twice in the third. In the decisive tiebreaker, ECU had a match point at 5-6, but the Mountaineer responded with a pair of points and a 7-6 match point of her own. After a few tense serves, Dinh

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finally prevailed, winning her match 4-6, 6-2, 7-6 (7), giving the Black and Gold a 5-2 final victory.

The Mountaineers have a short break before their next competition, as they prepare to host Elon on March 6 at 2:30 p.m. to kick off their Southern Conference schedule.

**Photo Courtesy: Gabby Gabriel, ASU Athletics**